

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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NEAE-00 IO-13 /070 W

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P R 181634Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2343

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8516

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH AL REP DR. HASAN SABRI AL-KHULI

1. CHARGE CALLED ON DR. KHULI MORNING NOV 18. DURING COURSE OF ONE HOUR CONVERSATION, DR. KHULI MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

2. HE COMPLIMENTED CHARGE ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED LEBANON. HE SAID TRIP HAD BEEN VERY MUCH APPRECIATED BY CHRISTIAN LEADERS, PARTICULARLY AS IT HAD TAKEN PLACE BEFORE THE ENTRY OF THE ASF FORCES INTO BEIRUT.

3. DR. KHULI SAID THAT THE PRESENT TRANSITION PERIOD IN LEBANON, WHICH WAS NEITHER WAR NOR PEACE, WAS A PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS TIME. USING THE ANALOGY OF A MOTHER WHO IS PARTICULARLY CAREFUL OF A CHILD'S HEALTH WHEN THE SEASONS CHANGE, HE DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH THE NECESSITY FOR PRESIDENT SARKIS TO MOVE WITH GREAT CARE AND CAUTION WHILE SECURITY WAS BEING REESTABLISHED IN LEBANON. HE DESCRIBED THE DECISION TO REOPEN THE AIRPORT ON NOV 19 AS DANGEROUS SINCE ONE MAN WITH A MORTAR CONCEALED IN THE TRUNK OF HIS CAR COULD DISRUPT AIRPORT OPERATION AND DESTROY THE FEELING OF CONFIDENCE WHICH WAS BEING CREATED. HE SAID
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THAT THERE WERE STILL FIVE PERCENT ON EACH SIDE WHO

WANTED THE WAR TO CONTINUE AND BLAMED THE RECENT UNSUCCESSFUL ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST RAYMOND EDDE ON THESE ELEMENTS. ALTHOUGH DANGER WAS DECREASING EVERY DAY, IT WAS STILL PRESENT.

4. SYRIA AND THE SUMMITS: DR KHULI SAID THAT PRIOR TO THE RIYADH AND CAIRO SUMMITS SYRIA HAD BEEN IN AN EXTREMELY WEAK POSITION INTERNALLY, WITHIN THE ARAB LEAGUE, AND INTERNATIONALLY. NOW THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN A FREE HAND AND A GIFT OF DOLS 90 MILLION. THIS HAD HAPPENED, HE SAID, BECAUSE THE ARABS WANTED TO SETTLE THE LEBANESE PROBLEM AND TO GET THE PALESTINIANS UNDER CONTROL AND ONLY THE SYRIANS WERE IN A POSITION TO ACCOMPLISH BOTH OF THESE GOALS.

5. PROBLEMS BETWEEN SYRIA AND LEBANON: DR KHULI SAID THAT THE SYRIANS HAD MANAGED THE OCCUPATION OF LEBANON VERY SKILLFULLY SO FAR. ONE OF THEIR INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS WOULD APPROACH THE HEAD MAN OF AN AREA TO BE OCCUPIED A DAY IN ADVANCE, TELLING HIM WHEN THE OPERATION WAS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE AND ASKING FOR HIS COOPERATION, EXPLAINING TACTFULLY THAT WHILE THE SYRIAN FORCES HAD A GREAT MANY HEAVY WEAPONS AT THEIR DISPOSAL, THEY DID NOT WISH TO USE THEM AS THEY HAD IN BHAMDUN. IF, AS UNSUALLY HAPPENED, THE VILLAGE CHIEF ASKED FOR A FEW HOURS POSTPONEMENT TO GIVE HIM TIME TO INFORM HIS PEOPLE, THE SYRIANS WOULD AGREE, THEREBY SECURING THE COOPERATION AND APPRECIATION OF THE LOCAL LEADERS. THE SYRIANS ALSO MADE IT KNOWN THAT THEY HAD TWO SQUADRONS OF AIRCRAFT ON ALERT TO OPPOSE ANY OPPOSITION BUT THEY HAD NOT HAD TO USE THEM. DR. KHULI SAID THAT BOTH SARKIS AND COL AL-HAJJ WERE IN EFFECT FIGUREHEADS AND THAT THE ASF OCCUPATION OF LEBANON HAD BEEN BOTH PLANNED AND EXECUTED BY THE SYRIANS.

6. AL-KHULI ALSO MENTIONED THAT SOME PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES AND THE SYRIAN OCCUPATION FORCES WERE BEGINNING TO DEVELOP. THE SYRIANS STILL HELD 150 LEBANESE POWS. AL-KHULI AND AN ICRC REP FROM GENEVA HAD DISCUSSED THIS PROBLEM WITH SYRIAN PRIME MINISTER KHULAYFAWI

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WHO HAD PROMISED THEIR RELEASE BUT SO FAR NOTHING HAD BEEN DONE. AL-KHULI SAID ALSO THAT TWO LAA SOLDIERS HAD BEEN PICKED UP BY SYRIAN TROOPS NEAR THE AMERICAN EMBASSY ON NOV 17 AND WERE STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR.

7. COMMENTING ON A REPORT IN THE BEIRUT PRESS THAT SARKIS WOULD SHORTLY BE VISITING THE ARAB COUNTRIES, AL-KHULI SAID HE HAD URGED SARKIS TO MAKE

SUCH TRIPS, BUT NOT TO STAY AWAY FROM LEBANON FOR LONG. THE OPENING OF THE BEIRUT AIRPORT MEANT THAT SARKIS COULD VISIT RIYADH, KUWAIT, OR CAIRO FOR CONSULTATIONS AND BE BACK IN BEIRUT THE SAME DAY.

8. WHEN CHARGE ASKED ABOUT SOUTH LEBANON, AL-KHULI SAID USG MUST KEEP THE ISRAELI HAWKS QUIET WHILE THIS PROBLEM IS BEING WORKED OUT. NONE OF THE KEY ARAB STATES WANTS A WAR WITH ISRAEL AND ALL WERE SEEKING A WAY TO CONTROL PALESTINAINS. ISRAEL, HE SAID, MUST NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE THE PALESTINIANS MADE; THEY MUST KNOW WHEN TO MAKE PEACE. TIME IS NOT ON THEIR SIDE.

9. AL-KHULI SAID THAT AS A RESULT OF THE RIYADH AND CAIRO SUMMIT DECISIONS HE NO LONGER HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN LEBANON. HE HAD RETURNED ONLY AT PRESIDENT SARKIS' REQUEST. HE HAS NOW DECIDED TO LEAVE LEBANON IN TWO OR THREE DAYS AFTER PERHAPS ONE MORE TRIP TO DAMASCUS IN ORDER TO MAKE HAJ. HE INTENDED TO RETURN TO LEBANON IN EARLY DECEMBER.

10. COMMENT: AS A RESULT OF THE RIYADH AND CAIRO SUMMITS, DR. AL-KHULI ROLE AS ARAB LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE IN LEBANON HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY THE SYRIAN ARMY, COMMANDED, IN THEORY AT LEAST, BY PRESIDENT SARKIS. APPARENTLY HE HAS NOT FOUND HIS NRE ROLE AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN SARKIS AND THE SYRIANS VERY CONGENIAL AND IS TAKING THE CONVENIENT EXCUSE OF THE JAJ TO REMOVE HIMSELF FROM THE SCENE, AT LEAST FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. LANE

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